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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 000578

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV

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SUBJECT: NEW APPOINTMENTS FOR OFFICIALS FROM DANANG AND LAM DONG

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PROG 06/25/2003

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11. Summary. A spurt of promotions will see the Party Secretaries from both Danang City and Lam Dong Province move to high-ranking positions in the Communist Party in Hanoi. The Danang City Deputy Party Secretary will then become the Party Secretary there, while a Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development from Hanoi will become Party Secretary for Lam Dong Province. End Summary.

DANANG CITY

12. In the Party Congress in Danang City on June 23, 2003, Mr. Nguyen Ba Thanh, Deputy Party Secretary and Chairman of Danang City People's Committee, was unanimously elected to be Party Secretary of the Danang Party Committee. He will continue to hold

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his current position until the next meeting of the Danang City People's Council, probably at the end of July. At that meeting he will present his resignation as head of the People's Committee and the Council will vote on his successor. Mr. Thanh moves up to succeed Mr. Nguyen Duc Hat, who will go to Hanoi to take the post of Deputy Head of the Central Commission on Organizational Affairs for the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). Both appointments have been arranged by the CPV but will not be final until confirmed by the Politburo, which will issue a formal decision.

LAM DONG PROVINCE

13. The CPV also announced in "Saigon Giai Phong" newspaper on June 25, that Mr. Nguyen Van Dang, the First Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and a member of the Executive Party Committee in Hanoi, will assume the position of the Party Secretary of Lam Dong Province. Mr. Dang will replace Mr. Nguyen

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Hoai Bao, who is leaving his positions as Party Secretary of Lam Dong Province and Chairman of the Lam Dong Province People's Council to go to Hanoi and take the post of Deputy Head of the Central Commission on Mass Mobilization in charge of the South. The Politburo has not yet issued formal decisions on these appointments either, but they are considered pro forma.

Comment

14. The CPV regularly rotates its high-level officials among the different regions of Vietnam, and the promotion of Mr. Hat and Mr. Bao to high-level CPV positions speaks well of their performance in Danang and Lam Dong. Danang City ranks fourth after Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi and Hai Phong for per capita income in Vietnam. It is the commercial hub for the provinces in the middle region of Vietnam, and has been modernizing and growing rapidly over the past three years. Mr. Thanh's promotion to Party Secretary sends a positive message for growth in the city. In his current deputy role, he has worked with the people of Danang to successfully carry out controversial land reclamation and resettlement projects that were the necessary precursors to modernizing the city's infrastructure. When the central government balked at the idea of funding a new bridge in Danang, he raised most of the funds by mobilizing local resources -- and the GVN later offered to fund the rest. Mr. Thanh has organized press conferences to discuss problems in the city. In response to public concerns, he

set up a civil security corps to regulate traffic flows and crack down on street crime.

15. The southernmost of the "Central Highland" provinces, Lam Dong is famous for its agriculture, but has suffered from the drop in coffee and other commodity prices. The appointment of Mr. Dang to the position of Party Secretary -- with his experience as the First Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development -- may mean the CPV wants to focus on those areas. As Provincial Party Secretary, Mr. Dang will have to balance the picturesque tourist

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center of Dalat against the periphery of Lam Dong's rural poor, in order to bring greater development to the province as a whole. He will also have to address the same volatile mix of ethnic minorities, land disputes and outlawed religious groups that exist in the three neighboring Central Highlands provinces of Dak Lak, Gia Lai, and Kon Tum. Lam Dong Province also gets more than its share of attention when it comes to tourism development, because its capital city, Dalat, is a very popular destination for both Vietnamese and foreigners. However, Lam Dong provincial authorities do not enjoy a good reputation when it comes to creating a hospitable climate for foreign investment. A Singaporean firm recently pulled out of a joint venture, and an American corporate businessman has also experienced problems there.

YAMAUCHI